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## Cross-cultural comparison of Spanish and British "service-with-a-smile" outcomes

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**Cross-cultural comparison of Spanish and British “service-with-a-smile” outcomes**

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Cross-cultural comparison of Spanish and British “service-with-a-smile” outcomes

**Background:** Employees working in the leisure service industry are required to show positive emotions when dealing with customers. However, empirical evidence confirms that faking emotions can lead to burnout. In contrast, employees that try to experience the emotions required by the role (i.e., Deep Acting [DA]) can lead to healthier outcomes. However, little is known about the process that underpins the link between DA and positive outcomes.

**Purpose:** Building on Cote’s social interaction model of emotion regulation and evidence linking customer satisfaction and DA, it was hypothesised that DA would be associated with employees’ self-actualization through customer interactions. This, in turn, was expected to explain the influence that DA has on relevant job attitudes (i.e., commitment, efficacy, turnover intentions). The model was tested in two countries with different emotional culture: Spain (i.e. impulsive) and the UK (i.e. institutional). Although UK was expected to report higher levels of effortful DA, the hypothesised process was expected to be the same.

**Methodology:** A cross-national design with theme park employees from Spain (N=208) and UK (N=204) was used. Hypotheses were tested with Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

**Findings:** The relationship between job commitment and DA was mediated by self-actualization, and commitment partially explained the association between DA and professional efficacy in both countries. The impulsive-oriented country showed lower levels of DA and more positive job attitudes.

**Value:** It is concluded that training employees to re-interpret costumer demands in less harming ways is required. The need to attend to cultural values is also discussed.

**Keywords:** Deep acting, Self-actualization, Job commitment, Professional efficacy, Turnover

intentions, Cross-national

## 1. Introduction

Front-line employees from Hospitality and Leisure Industry (HLI) organisations can affect service quality and customer satisfaction via their emotional displays. In particular, empirical research has demonstrated that positive emotions during service transactions can improve customers' mood and service evaluation (e.g., Groth et al., 2009). Furthermore, the frequent experience of positive emotions by employees improves overall psychological wellbeing (e.g. Fredrickson, 2001), and helps develop positive attitudes towards their job (Cho, Rutherford & Park, 2013). In short, employees working within organisations that promote the display and experience of positive emotions to their customers are more likely to be a healthier, more productive, and committed workforce.

However, specific strategies that employees utilise to achieve these required emotional displays may sometimes counteract with positive outcomes of these emotional transactions (e.g., Chu, Baker, & Murrmann, 2012; Kinman, 2009). One such counteracting strategy is Surface Acting (SA). SA refers to the process whereby employees hide their real emotions and fake emotions required by the role. Studies have consistently shown that employees' lack of authenticity can be perceived by their customers, and can lead to negative service evaluations (e.g., Grandey, Fisk, & Steiner, 2005; Groth et al., 2009). Furthermore, SA can lead to burnout (e.g. Martínez-Iñigo, Totterdell, Alcover, & Holman, 2007), a chronic stress syndrome that increases organisational costs through employee absences and turnover (e.g., Hülshager & Schewe, 2011). Nevertheless, "service-with-a-smile" has pronounced positive outcomes when employees utilize Deep Acting (DA) strategies (i.e., trying to actually experience the emotions required by the role) (Chu et al., 2012). For instance, DA is associated with positive job attitudes such as job satisfaction and professional efficacy (e.g.,

Cho et al., 2013). Additionally, such employees receive satisfactory customer evaluations, due to authentic displays that the DA strategy generates (e.g. Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, & Sideman 2004). Consequently, the organisational gains of showing positive emotions to customers both directly (through the impact on service quality), and indirectly (through employees' wellbeing) appear to be restricted to employees' use of DA.

However, DA is not an "easy" strategy as it involves a high level of emotional effort (Quinones-Garcia, Rodriguez-Carvajal, & Clarke, 2013). In fact, some scholars have argued that the energy required in DA is much greater than SA (Liu, Prati, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2008), yet only SA is associated with burnout. The energy investment and lack of recovery process that explains SA experience of employee burnout has been empirically demonstrated. However, the question as to how the energy invested in DA is transformed into avoiding burnout and leads to positive outcomes is unanswered. Expanding upon Côte's (2005) interpersonal emotion regulation model, and building on the resource development outcomes of positive emotion generation (Fredrickson, 2001), the present authors argue that the effort invested in DA triggers a resource development process due to customer's positive reactions of employees' authentic displays. These interactions are integrated as an experience of self-actualization and professional growth that helps develop organisational-valued resources. Therefore, in line with Cropanzano et al. (2004), it is expected that harmonization between feelings and expressions will result in positive attitudes towards the job itself, thereby increasing job commitment and professional efficacy. This resource gaining activity is expected to prevent the intentions to leave the organisation, which in other studies has been found strongly associated with SA (e.g., Hülshager & Schewe, 2011).

One particular HLI context that relies heavily on the expression of positive emotions is the Theme Park industry. Successful customer experience in Theme Parks relies not only

on being kind and considerate to customers, but also to a great extent, on whether employees have managed to transmit and create the required “fun experience” that such businesses are selling (Guerrier & Adib, 2003). In the pioneering work of Van Maanen and Kunda (1989) on *Disneyland* Theme Parks, the authors stressed the crucial role of employees’ display of cheer as they were rewarded with more shifts the following week. In spite of the high salience of positive emotional displays in Theme Parks, little is known about how “service-with-a-smile” influences employees’ outcomes in this unique context. Since customer satisfaction relies to a large extent on employees’ authentic displays (Grandey et al., 2004), Theme Parks should be interested in encouraging strategies that enhance satisfaction whilst promoting employee wellbeing and positive work attitudes. Therefore, the resource development process triggered by DA is tested using Theme Park employees in the present study.

The “service-with-a-smile” model is widespread in HLI within American and Anglo-Saxon cultures but less so elsewhere in the world (e.g., Grandey et al., 2005; Hülshager & Schewe, 2011). An important contribution of the present paper is that the proposed theoretical model is empirically tested in both an Anglo-Saxon country (UK) and a Southern-European country (Spain). These countries differ in their attitude towards free expression of emotions (Gordon, 1998). In broad terms, Spain can be conceptualized as an impulsive-oriented country and the UK is a more institutionally-oriented country as it encourages regulation based on accepted norms (Grandey et al., 2005). Therefore, it is hypothesised that UK service industry employees work on emotions to a higher degree (i.e., engage in more DA) than service industry employees working in Spain (therefore displaying a higher use of emotional labour). However, in line with a previous study that confirmed the generalization of the relationships in both impulsive and institutionally-oriented countries (Grandey et al.,

2005), it was expected that the proposed model would be successfully replicated in both samples.

2. Theoretical background

The main focus of “service-with-a-smile” studies has traditionally been in explaining the negative impact of faking emotions on employees’ strain and burnout. Côté’s (2005) social interaction model has been particularly useful in explaining the intervening mechanisms of this association. The model builds on a robust body of knowledge in the Emotion Regulation (ER) literature. These studies demonstrate that suppressing and faking emotions has both intra-individual (e.g. involves effort, high internal arousal) and inter-individual negative consequences (e.g. perceived fake emotional display from interaction partner). In contrast, deep acting – although involving effort – is often associated with more positive interpersonal outcomes (e.g., authenticity of emotional display perceived from interaction partner). Applying these findings to the customer-employee interaction, Côte explains how the chosen EL strategy results in opposite reactions from customers (i.e., SA results in negative customer reactions and deep acting results in positive customer reactions). These in turn increase employee strain (if negative) and decrease (if positive). In short, there is an implicit effort-reward exchange intervening mechanism between employee and customer that in turn predicts the direction of the experienced strain.

The negative impact of “service with a smile” predicted by Cote’s model has been confirmed empirically. Thus, the relationship between SA and exhaustion appears to be mediated by the high effort involved in faking emotions and customers’ lack of recognition of their effort (e.g. Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Martínez-Iñigo et al., 2007; Quiñones-García et al., 2013). In line with this, Hülshesguer & Schewe (2011) concluded that the same intervening mechanism – albeit acting in the opposite direction – would explain the lack of

energy depletion and positive outcomes associated with DA. Nonetheless, field studies have not found significant relationships between DA and unrewarding interactions with customers (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). Similarly, studies have failed to find a consistent significant relationship between DA and different indicators of strain (Bono & Vey, 2005). In contrast, individuals who engage in DA often report higher levels of professional efficacy (e.g., Grandey et al. 2004). Hence, it is argued that investing resources through DA could result in qualitatively different, higher-order outcomes that go beyond perception of fair exchange of effort and reward, indicating a resource development process, rather than an immediate resource recovery process. In this way, Côte's model should be expanded to acknowledge not only the lack of resources depletion but the opportunity of developing resources through interaction with customers.

### ***2.1 Building resources through deep acting***

From a humanistic/positive psychology perspective (e.g., Fredrickson, 2001), experiencing tensions and investing effort in facing life challenges, are both necessary and inevitable in order to achieve self-actualization and fulfilment of individual potential. Similarly, performing DA requires effort, yet this effort results in positive customer feedback and perceived efficacy (e.g., Grandey et al. 2004). Consequently, harmonizing the emotions required by the role through DA may enhance the salient value of positive interactions with customers, becoming part of employees' self-actualization process. Thus, it is hypothesized that engaging in DA leads to the perception of positive customer interactions as a source of growth and self-actualization.

Hypothesis 1: *DA is positively associated with self-actualization via the employee-customer interaction.*



The harmonization between feelings and emotional displays achieved through DA is not only expected to result in self-valued outcomes, but may also trigger the job attitudes that are highly valued by organisations. For instance, evidence suggests DA is associated with organisational commitment (Cho et al., 2013). Furthermore, it has been argued that the efforts to experience emotions consistent with the ones required by the role, may lead to the perception that expressing these emotions to customers is less “work”, and more of an opportunity to express individual’s own felt emotions (Martinez-Iñigo et al., 2007). An organisationally-valued outcome linked to this process is job commitment, defined as the “strength of an individual’s identification with an involvement in a particular job” (Millward & Hopkins, 2006:1535). According to Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), the long-term performance of DA encourages long-term identification with the job (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Similarly, Liu et al. (2008) argue DA facilitates employees to harmonize the role with the self-identity. Furthermore, studies have supported the positive associations between DA and various indicators of job involvement (Kruml & Geddes, 2000). In view of this:

Hypothesis 2: *DA is positively related to employee job commitment.*

As hypothesized earlier, DA is expected to have a strong impact on the extent to which individuals can fulfil their potential based on positive interactions with customers. Since this is the most immediate and closely related consequence of DA, and job commitment is a more generic job attitude, it is expected that the development and establishment of job commitment is mediated by self-actualization via interaction with customers.

Hypothesis 3: *The association between DA and employee job commitment is mediated by self-actualization via interaction with customers.*

Psychological identification with one's job has been related to a wide range of crucial outcomes for HLI organisations. For instance, identification with one's job has been found as an indicator of performance (Brown, 1996). Furthermore, job commitment is associated with feelings of professional efficacy and positive self-appraisal. Alternatively, Cropanzano et al. (2004) propose that the impact of both SA and DA on relevant job outcomes is exerted through the effect that these variables have on the work alienation-involvement continuum. Based on this, and because some studies have reported an association between DA and professional efficacy (e.g., Lee & Ok, 2012), job commitment could be the mediator variable in this process. Nevertheless, alignment between emotions and feelings associated with DA could, on its own, be enough to explain individuals' positive evaluation of their own performance (e.g., Kruml & Geddes, 2000). In view of this, a partial mediation rather than a full mediation path is expected.

Hypothesis 4: *The association between DA and professional efficacy is partially mediated by job commitment*

Surface acting has been often linked to emotional exhaustion that in turn is a strong predictor of turnover intention (e.g. Goodwin et al., 2011). Thus, the drain of emotional resources and the lack of recovery through positive customer interactions exchange could (over time) lead to coping mechanisms such as leaving the organization to deal with the exhaustion. Associations between DA and turnover have not been empirically tested. In line with the resource development process hypothesized in the present study, individuals that engage in DA and experience a range of positive outcomes from their interactions with customers are expected to want to stay with their organisations.

Hypothesis 5: *DA is negatively related to turnover intentions of employees.*

2.2 Cross-national comparison of the resource development process

The Anglo-Saxon model of economic liberalism has become increasingly adopted by Latin-European countries (e.g., Spain, France) (Jesuino, 2002). However, there is still a gap between these clusters regarding the adoption of the customer service excellence model (Ashkanasy et al., 2002). In particular, the “service-with-a-smile” model is not as widespread in Latin-European countries as in the Anglo-Saxon ones. Therefore, rules for emotional displays at work may vary across countries (Grandey et al., 2005). For instance, Rudolph (1993, in Morris & Feldman, 1996) highlighted the rejection of French individuals regarding exaggerated positive emotional displays by workers in *Disneyland Paris*. This may be explained by the impulsive emotional culture of this country that appears to reject fake displays and encourage free regulation of emotion (Grandey et al., 2005).

Most empirical studies originate from Anglo-Saxon samples, although there are increasing numbers of Asian studies (e.g., Cho et al., 2013). Regarding the Latin European cluster, very limited work has been done. Of particular relevance is a study by Grandey et al. (2005) that compared the impact of SA in two countries (France and USA). The authors built upon Gordon’s (1989) classification of emotional cultures into impulsive-oriented cultures (i.e., those that encourage free regulation of emotions and reject fake displays) and institutionally-oriented cultures (i.e., strong norms about regulating emotions to fulfil social expectations). Consequently, France was chosen as an example of an impulsive-oriented country and USA as an institutionally-oriented country. Based on the higher control over own emotional expressions in the impulsive oriented country (i.e. France), the authors expected that the emotional culture (France) would moderate the strong association between SA and exhaustion. However, even though American employees engaged in significantly higher levels of SA, and experienced higher levels of emotional exhaustion, culture did not moderate

the relationship. Therefore, cultural differences did not affect the underlying process of resource depletion triggered by SA. Consequently, even though the present authors anticipate significantly lower levels of effortful DA in countries that encourage free regulation of emotions, the hypothesized resource development is likely to be the same across the two representatives of impulsive and institutional-oriented countries chosen for the present study.

Hypothesis 6: *The resource development process is the same in Spain and UK*

In order to account for the limited number of studies carried out in the Latin-European cluster, a different country from the Latin-European cluster was chosen (i.e., Spain). Following Gordon's (1998) classification, it was conceptualized that Spain would be an impulsive-oriented country regarding emotional expression. Spain, like other Latino-Mediterranean cultures, value social interdependence and encourage behaviours that make social interactions meaningful (Rodríguez-Mosquera et al., 2002). Within a country where the culture of "honour" and respect for tradition has long historical roots, meaningful interactions with customers may have little to do with adhering to externally imposed rules of emotional display. The country chosen to represent an institutional-oriented culture was the UK. This is based on the similar presence of requirements to express positive emotions to institutional-oriented countries like USA (Grandey et al., 2005). Mann (2006) demonstrated that both British and American samples had similarly high expectations about positive emotions displayed by customer service employees. Further support to the conceptualization of the UK as a more institutionally-oriented country compared to Spain can be found in their different uncertainty avoidance attitudes (i.e. country's tolerance towards clear structure, and rule-regulated behaviour in social interactions). Thus, institutionally-oriented countries have higher levels of uncertainty avoidance than the impulsive-oriented countries. Indeed, the UK scored much higher levels in this variable than the Latin-European countries such as Spain

and France as reported by the GLOBE study (Ashkanasy et al., 2002).

In sum, the resource development model states that DA facilitates a process of self- and organisational-valued outcomes related to self-actualization, job commitment, professional efficacy and low intentions to leave the service organisation. This model is cross-validated in two countries to demonstrate that regardless of variable levels, underlying mechanisms are the same, therefore enhancing the applicability of the model. The cross-national validation of the model provides cross-cultural research in an area that is lacking.

Insert Figure 1 about here

**3. Method**

***3.1 Participants and procedure***

The data collection took place during 2013. Employees working in a high profile service industry (i.e., theme parks) were selected due to the salience of rules for positive emotions towards its customers that this context requires. Since the authors wanted to cross-validate the model across countries with different emotional culture, homogeneity in all other aspects was sought. Theme park clusters belonged to equivalent chains in each country and had a similar organisational structure. In websites of both theme park chains there was constant mention to the ability of prospective employees to “inspire and put a smile on customer’s faces”.

The British sample comprised 204 employees working in a UK theme park chain. Their ages ranged from 18 to 72 years with a mean average of 29 years. Approximately one-third of the sample participants were male (36%) and the remainder female (64%). The Spanish sample comprised 208 employees working in a Spanish theme park chain. Their ages ranged from 17 to 61 years with a mean average of 30 years. Approximately half of the

sample participants were male (52%) and the remainder female (8%).

Insert Table 1 about here

### 3.2 Instruments

#### 3.2.1 *Deep acting*

The DA scale was used (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003) as this is the only psychometrically validated measure in the literature. The Spanish adaptation by Martínez-Iñigo et al. (2007) was also used. This scale has been used widely in hospitality and tourism samples (Kim, 2008). Respondents rate the extent to which they engage in each of the statements when dealing with customers from 1=never to 5=always. A sample item being: “Try to actually experience the emotions that I must show”. The Cronbach’s alpha was .72 for the British sample and .80 for the Spanish sample.

#### 3.2.2 *Self-actualization through the employee-customer interaction*

A new scale was developed for the present study and comprised four items using a 5-point Likert scale (1=true to 5=false). The new instrument was initially inspired by the Rewarding Interactions Scale developed by Brotheridge and Grandey (2002). However, the rewarding interactions scale taps into the fair exchange of reward for effort (e.g., “I get very little thanks or recognition from my customers in return for my efforts”). For the new scale, items were generated that reflected the self-actualization process associated with successful interactions with customers. The final items were: “The interactions I have with my customers’ help me to grow as a professional”, “One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is the interaction with my customers”, and “Any time that I interact with my customers I feel fulfilled”. Prior to the model testing stage, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted with the existing Rewarding Interactions Scale and with the items in the Self-actualization

Through Interaction Scale. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .86 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity achieved statistical significance ( $\chi^2=828.8, p<.001$ ). Two factors were extracted that explained 72% of the variance. Item loadings were high (above 0.6) and loaded only on their theoretical dimension only. Further, bivariate correlations showed that DA was not associated with rewarding interactions ( $r=.070, p=.327$ ) whereas self-actualization was ( $r=.330, p<.001$ ). This provided initial support for the construct validity of the scale. The Cronbach's alpha for the British sample was .88. The scale was then adapted for the Spanish study following the recommended procedure (e.g., Grandey et al., 2005) and the scale achieved a good Cronbach's alpha .88.

3.2.3 *Job commitment*

The Job Commitment Scale (JCS) from Moreno-Jiménez et al. (2012) was used. As is recommended for back-translation (Beaton et al., 2000), firstly two bilingual researchers translated all items. Then, another bilingual expert translated the English version back into Spanish. Finally, the author of this latter version compared it to the original. There were few differences between the English and Spanish version and they were easily resolved through discussion so that a final English version was agreed upon. The JCS comprises four items, a sample item being: "I really care about my job and identify with it". The response scale varies from 1=totally disagree to 4 =totally agree. The Cronbach's alpha was .88 in British sample and .85 in the Spanish sample.

3.2.4 *Professional efficacy*

The Professional Efficacy sub-scale from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 1996) and the Spanish adapted version by Moreno-Jimenez et al. (2012) were used. The scale comprised six items. Cronbach's alpha for the British sample was .82 and .88 in the Spanish sample.

### 3.2.5 *Turnover intentions*

The Turnover Intention Scale developed by Moreno-Jiménez et al. (2012) was used, following the same back-translation procedure for the English version. An item example for this 4-item and 4-point Likert scale (totally disagree-totally agree) is: “Nowadays, I don’t spend more time at work than the necessary time required”. Cronbach’s alpha for the British sample was .82 and .80 for the Spanish sample.

### 3.3 *Data analysis*

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to test the hypothesised model of study with two model testing steps (measurement and structural model). Maximum likelihood was used to estimate the parameters with AMOS 20 software. In order to test the mediation hypothesis, Baron and Kenny’s (1986) adapted method for SEM (e.g. Crawford-Solberg et al., 2002) and James et al’s (2006) recommendation for mediation analysis in SEM were followed. Various goodness-of-fit indices were used to model fit: the chi-square statistic divided by the degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ), the comparative fit index (CFI), goodness of fit index (GFI), the incremental fit index (IFI), the Tucker-Lewis coefficient (TLI), the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The  $\chi^2/df$  ratio must be below 3, the values of CFI, GFI, IFI and TLI should be above .9 and the values of SRMR and RMSEA below .08 (e.g. Carmeli et al., 2009).

## 4. **Results**

### 4.1 *Homogeneity of the samples and variable levels*

The chi-square test for gender and country was significant, therefore independence of gender across both countries was not supported ( $\chi^2=10.217$ ,  $p=.001$ ). Similar results were found for level of qualifications, full vs. part time ( $\chi^2=23.407$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Next, the multivariate



test Wilk's Lambda was utilized and provided information about the significant effect of country on the combined effect of all quantitative variables ( $\lambda=.951$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Participants did not significantly differ on age ( $\bar{x}_{\text{Spain}}=29.3$  and  $\bar{x}_{\text{UK}}=29.7$ ;  $F=.147$ ,  $p=.701$ ) or job tenure ( $\bar{x}_{\text{Spain}}=8.3$  and  $\bar{x}_{\text{UK}}=8.4$ ;  $F=.006$ ;  $p=.938$ ). A multivariate analysis of covariance was performed with country as independent variable, the demographic variables as covariates, and the variables of study as dependent variables. The model was significant only for country of origin Wilk's  $\lambda=7.07$ ;  $p<.001$ ;  $\eta^2=11.7\%$ .

Post-hoc analyses were then conducted with t-tests to examine differences in variable levels. The British sample displayed average higher levels of DA ( $\bar{x}_{\text{UK}}=3.22$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and higher turnover intentions ( $\bar{x}_{\text{UK}}=2.32$ ,  $p<.001$ ). On the other hand, the Spanish sample displayed significantly higher levels of job commitment ( $\bar{x}_{\text{Spain}}=3.16$ ,  $p<.001$ ), professional efficacy ( $\bar{x}_{\text{Spain}}=4.06$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and self-actualization through the interaction with customers ( $\bar{x}_{\text{Spain}}=3.56$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

**4.2 Country-by-country analysis**

The measurement model comprised the five latent variables and the corresponding indicators (i.e. scale items with standardized factor loadings above .5). The results of the overall Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) showed acceptable fit to the data in the UK sample ( $\chi^2/\text{df}=1.57$ ; CFI=.959; IFI=.959; GFI=.905; TLI=.948; 5; RMSEA=.054; SRMR=.064) and in Spain ( $\chi^2/\text{df}=1.79$ ; CFI=.945; IFI=.946; GFI=.903; RMSEA=.062; SRMR=.065). All constructs exhibited good construct reliability coefficients (between .76-.85) and variance extracted was above .5 thus construct validity was confirmed in both countries respectively.

Insert Table 2 about here

The fit of the structural model in the British sample was good ( $\chi^2/df=1.64$ ; CFI=.963; IFI=.964; GFI=.917; TLI=.953; RMSEA=.057; SRMR=.058). Parameters for these models are presented in Table 3. All hypothesized paths were significant so Hypotheses 1, 2, and 5 were confirmed. In order to test the mediation hypothesis (3 and 4), the baseline model with all paths was compared to models without the hypothesized mediator in each case (Crawford-Solberg et al., 2002).

Insert Table 3 about here

Regarding Hypothesis 3, the full mediation model achieved a good fit ( $\chi^2/df=1.56$ ; CFI=.979; IFI=.980; GFI=.958; TLI=.968; RMSEA=.054; SRMR=.055) and the path between DA and job commitment was significant ( $\beta=.321$ ;  $p<.001$ ). In the partial mediation model, the path between DA and job commitment became non-significant and constraining this path to zero (i.e., James et al., 2006) did not increase the chi-square significantly ( $\beta=.071$ ;  $p=.399$ ), therefore full mediation was confirmed. Similar results were found for Hypothesis 4 (see Table 3), therefore full mediation was confirmed.

The fit of the overall model in the Spanish sample was also good ( $\chi^2/df=1.80$ ; CFI=.957; IFI=.957; GFI=.917; TLI=.945; RMSEA=.06; SRMR=.05). Parameters for these models are presented in Table 3. All hypothesized paths were significant, so Hypotheses 1, 2, and 5 were confirmed. Regarding Hypothesis 3, full mediation was confirmed (i.e., when the path between DA and job commitment was estimated in presence of the mediator it became non-significant  $\beta=.044$ ,  $p=.507$ ). Finally, regarding Hypothesis 4, the relationship between DA and professional efficacy was partially mediated by job commitment (the path was significantly reduced though still significant  $\beta=.251$ ,  $p<.01$ ; Sobel test  $z=2.65$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

4.2 Multigroup analysis

Prior to testing the model cross-nationally, measurement invariance of the instruments with Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis was tested using AMOS 20. The first level of invariance was confirmed by the good fit of the model tested simultaneously with the Spanish and British sample ( $\chi^2/df=1.69$ ; CFI=.949; IFI=.950; TLI=.939; GFI=.900; RMSEA=.041; SRMR=.06). Metric invariance was also confirmed here a model with no constraints across groups is compared to one with equal factor loadings constraint across samples. Since the increase in chi-square was not significant ( $\chi^2=12.7$ ;  $p=.482$ ), metric invariance was accepted therefore the latent constructs underlying these items are comparable across groups.

Hypotheses 1 to 5 were tested simultaneously across both groups in the structural model. The fit of the overall model was good and parameters are presented in Table 4. All hypothesised paths were significant so Hypotheses 1, 2, and 5 were confirmed. In order to test the two mediation Hypotheses (3, 4) models with each of the IV and DV were fitted and compared to partial mediation models.

Insert Table 4 about here

Regarding Hypothesis 3, the full mediation model without the mediator (i.e., self-actualization) had a good fit, and the path between DA and job commitment was significant ( $\beta_{Spain}=.336$ ,  $p<.001$ ;  $\beta_{UK}=.321$ ,  $p<.001$ ). When the models with and without the path between the IV and DV were compared, the increase in chi-square was not significant (1.27;  $p=.259$ ). Hence, full mediation is confirmed across countries. Additionally, the relationship between DA and professional efficacy found was partially mediated by job commitment in both countries (Hypothesis 5). Thus, the path between DA and professional efficacy in the model without the mediator was significant. When the path between the IV and the DV was fixed to

zero, the increase in chi-square was significant (12.59,  $p < .001$ ) thus the less parsimonious model was retained. Finally, the association between DA and turnover was significant in both countries and of a negative sign, confirming Hypothesis 5. In short, the multigroup analyses demonstrate that even though some differences were found when analysed independently, they did not reveal any significant differences in the process across either country. Therefore, Hypothesis 6 was supported.

## 5. Discussion

The present study set out to examine the resource development process associated with deep acting (DA) and how this strategy affects positive job attitudes (i.e., professional efficacy and turnover intentions) in front-line employees within British and Spanish theme parks. Furthermore, the study aimed to investigate this process in two countries with different tendencies towards free regulation of emotion and different degree of “service-with-a-smile” model acceptance (i.e., Spain and the UK). With regards to the inter-country differences, the impulsive-oriented country (Spain) reported significantly lower levels of effortful DA than the institutionally-oriented country (UK). This expands previous findings where another impulsive-oriented country (France), reported significantly lower levels of SA than the institutionally-oriented one (USA) (Grandey et al., 2005). Furthermore, we found that compared to the British sample, the Spanish sample appeared to enjoy higher levels of job commitment, self-actualization through the interaction, and professional efficacy as well as lower levels of turnover intentions. From a cultural perspective, it may be speculated that the Spanish enjoyment of a less regulated emotional display, might encourage a higher sense of ownership and perceived efficacy in the role (Grandey et al., 2005). Nevertheless, the cultural difference is a distal trait and variables such as control over emotional displays should have been incorporated to support this statement. Further research is needed here.

Regarding the resource development process, the hypothesised relationships were confirmed in both countries. The literature suggests that DA leads to positive interactions with customers. However, previous operationalisations of rewarding interactions appear to account for a rather instrumental process of basic exchange between employee's effort and customer recognition of the effort. Furthermore, no association between DA and this variable has actually been found (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). This is the first study to explain how positive interactions with customers triggered through DA, impact on employees' wellbeing. Thus, rather than an immediate exchange of recognition for effort, the interactions are perceived as sources of personal growth and fulfilment which in turn explain other positive outcomes such as job commitment. Although previous studies have found an association between DA and role identification (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993), the results of the present study suggest that it is the self-actualization process that positive customer interactions facilitate and explain this favourable job attitude. This process of effort investment resulting in desirable outcomes can also be explained using Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden and Build theory. Thus, the experience of positive emotions following DA, though effortful, broadens individual resources repertoire to cope with future demands (as opposed to SA that depletes resources).

According to Cropanzano et al. (2004), the impact of EL on wellbeing can be analysed through the effect that DA and SA have on the continuum work alienation-commitment. Thus, whereas SA results in alienation, DA is expected to lead to commitment that in turn explains positive outcomes. Supporting this model, the association between DA and professional efficacy was mediated, though partially, by job commitment. Thus, although DA has a direct effect on professional efficacy, this effect is partially carried by the impact of DA on job commitment. Finally, in line with the resource development process, DA was

negatively associated with intentions to leave the organisations, although the latter was more significantly predicted by job commitment. These results appear to support findings of previous studies, where job commitment has been found a strong predictor of intentions to stay (Brown, 1996). Although intentions to leave is an attitude and not an objective figure, the relevance of these results should not be under-estimated as current studies reveal that this is one of the strongest predictors of actual turnover (Chu et al., 2012)

In short, the process model confirmed in this study supports the resource development route which leads to reduced intentions to leave the organisation. More broadly, these results support the differential pattern of effects that emotional labour strategies. These patterns appear to go beyond the same process but with opposite effects as deep and surface acting lead to qualitatively different processes. Therefore, whereas SA has been more strongly related to energy depletion outcomes such as burnout, and poor health symptoms (e.g. Martínez-Iñigo et al., 2007), DA is not related at all in most studies (e.g. Lee & Ok, 2012). In contrast, the outcomes of DA are more in the line with a cognitive resources nourishing process that demonstrates that there is a positive side to the “service-with-a-smile” (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2011).

This study has several managerial implications for companies that aim to achieve maximum standards of service quality whilst enhancing front-line employee’s psychological and physical wellbeing. Firstly, front-line employees should be trained in the performance of DA. This is a complex process that involves a high level of emotion regulation sophistication. Consequently, organisations should not assume that individuals are naturally equipped to engage in DA. For instance, staff members may benefit from training in strategies to recall memories where a similar emotion to that required in the situation with the customer is called for. Alternatively, they might need support in finding strategies to recall situations that help

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3 them calm down and use these emotions to deal with upset or agitated customers.  
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5 Organisations should aim to identify “deep acting champions” who could disseminate the  
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7 techniques they have acquired with other colleagues allowing them to face customers in a  
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9 more positive and effective way. In addition to obtaining long-term resources relevant for  
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11 organisations, the frequent practice of DA may diminish the effort involved over time,  
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13 potentially becoming a more automatic process in most occasions.  
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17 Finally, organisations should attend to the cultural values of employees when setting  
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19 the expectations for emotional displays with customers. Thus, in spite of the globalization of  
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21 the service culture and the increasing homogenisation regarding the expression of emotions in  
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23 customer interactions; organisations should be aware that a high impulsive culture could  
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25 result in employees’ resistance towards unrealistic high expectations of positive displays. In  
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27 this case, organisations can still influence employee’s emotional displays indirectly through  
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29 the development of a positive work climate, where employees’ positive emotions are then  
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31 naturally felt and transmitted to others through the process of emotional contagion (Chu et al.,  
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33 2012).  
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37 Among the limitations of the present study, the risk of common method bias must be  
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39 acknowledged. Nevertheless, the study followed Conway and Lance’s (2010) steps to  
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41 minimise this risk. For instance, measures were used with good construct validity by ensuring  
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43 that the measurement model had a good fit for each construct of study, and items loaded in  
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45 their respective latent variables. Another limitation of the study was the imbalance in gender  
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47 among the British sample, which could have compromised the cross-validation of the model  
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49 across the countries. However, the MANCOVA analysis clearly demonstrated that only  
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51 country of origin – and not gender distribution – could have influenced our hypothesized  
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53 relationships. Furthermore, the focus of this study was the development of resources through  
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DA and although the relationship between both SA and DA with negative outcomes were moderated by gender (Scott & Barnes, 2011), this is not the case when examining the impact of DA on the development of positive outcomes such as increased positive affect (Scott & Barnes, 2011). Additionally, there are inherent limitations to the cross-sectional nature of this study. This does not allow confirming causal association between the variables. Nevertheless, the consistency of the mediation effects found in two independent samples, gives strong evidence for the sequential order proposed in the conceptual framework for this study. Notwithstanding, future investigation with time series or longitudinal methodology is required to confirm the sequential development of the process. Furthermore, it is known that specific variables could be associated with a higher tendency to deep act (e.g., reappraisal). Further research is encouraged to identify the dispositional and organisational variables that most accurately predict individuals' tendency to exert additional effort in order to show authentic emotions to customers. Considering that the link between leadership use of DA and expression of genuine emotions, and employees' perception of leaders' authenticity has been demonstrated (Humphrey, Polack, & Hawer, 2008); an interesting area meriting further study is the influence of leadership emotional labour on front-line employees' use of deep acting.

The extent to which these are due to "cultural" aspects cannot be concluded. Firstly, one must rule out potential differences regarding sample characteristics. These differences were minimised in this study as samples were collected from the same type of organisation in both countries, and did not differ significantly in relevant demographic factors. In addition to these factors, it could be argued that cross-cultural studies solely based on the dimensions identified at national level ignore the extent to which individuals' hold the values of their country of origin or not (Matsumoto & Yoo, 2006). In order to avoid the cultural attribution



fallacy, the above statements should be initially attributed to cross-national differences as these can be cultural or not. Future studies are encouraged where individual values are evaluated, controlling whether their values are consistent with their national culture.

In short, this study provides a theoretical model cross-nationally validated that demonstrates the positive consequences of “service-with-a-smile” when this is performed through DA. This resource development process leads to self-actualization through the interactions with customers that in turn predicts job commitment, professional efficacy, and prevents intentions to leave the organisation.

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Table 1-Sociodemographic variables by gender and country

	UK (N=203)		Spain (N=208)	
	Male (N=72)	Female (N=127)	Male (N=109)	Female (N=99)
Age (M,SD)	29, 9.8	29.5, 10.7	30.1, 8.8	29.3, 10.4
Years in Customer Service (M,SD)	7.9, 7.7	8.5, 7.5	9.18, 8.5	7.5, 7.4
Years in Current Organization (M,SD)	3.9, 5.1	3.9, 4.6	6.3, 6.9	6.1, 7.2
Customer service/admin role	8	26	14	18
Rides & Entertainment	41	83	69	44
Hospitality	72	127	26	37

Table 2-Measurement properties of study constructs in British and Spanish theme park employees

Construct and indicators	British sample (n=204)			Spanish sample (n = 208)		
	Standardized loading	Reliability ( $\lambda^2$ )	Variance extracted estimate	Standardized loading	Reliability ( $\lambda^2$ )	Variance extracted estimate
Deep acting		.79*	.667		.83*	.721
$\lambda_1$	.903	.815		.681	.463	
$\lambda_2$	.721	.520		.990	.980	
Self-actualization through the interaction		.87*	.636		.87*	.639
$\lambda_1$	.730	.532		.650	.422	
$\lambda_2$	.822	.675		.838	.702	
$\lambda_3$	.827	.683		.889	.790	
$\lambda_4$	.811	.657		.803	.644	
Job commitment		.85*	.658		.84*	.636
$\lambda_1$	.696	.484		.717	.514	
$\lambda_2$	.818	.669		.801	.641	
$\lambda_3$	.907	.822		.868	.753	
Professional efficacy		.76*	.517		.81*	
$\lambda_1$	.827	.683		.829	.687	
$\lambda_2$	.563	.316		.552	.304	
$\lambda_3$	.743	.552		.884	.781	
Turnover intentions		.85*			.75*	
$\lambda_1$	.772	.595	.660	.683	.466	.499
$\lambda_2$	.824	.678		.674	.454	
$\lambda_3$	.842	.708		.731	.534	

Table 3- Hypothesised path estimates for British (n = 204) and Spanish (n = 208) theme park employees

Hypothesis	Paths	$B_{UK}$	Model Comparison	$B_{Spain}$	Model Comparison
1	Deep acting → Self-actualization through the interaction	.387***		.465***	
2,3	Deep acting → Job commitment* (without self-actualization through the interaction)	.321**		.336***	
	Deep acting → Job commitment	.071	p=.399	.044	p=.507
	Self-actualization through interaction → Job commitment	.651***		.671***	
4	Deep acting → Professional efficacy* (without job commitment)	.203*		.413***	
	Deep acting → Professional efficacy	.113	p=.226	.251**	p<.001 (z=2.65, p<.001)
	Job commitment → Professional efficacy	.241**		.333***	
5	Deep acting → Turnover intentions	-.267**		-.232**	

Notes: All paths except those with \* refer to the paths for the baseline model with all partial mediations. Paths with \* refer to the full mediation model.  $B$ : standardized regression coefficients. Model comparison displays the difference between a model with all paths and a more parsimonious one where the path between the independent variable and the dependent variable is fixed to zero.



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Table 4- Hypothesised path estimates and model fit indices for British (n = 204) and Spanish (n = 208) theme park employees simultaneously (multigroup confirmatory factor analysis)

Hypothesis	Paths	<i>B<sub>UK</sub></i>	<i>B<sub>Spain</sub></i>	Model Comparison Multigroup	Model Fit Multigroup
1	Deep acting→ Self-actualization through the interaction	.392**	.470***		$\chi^2/df = 1.71$
2,3	Deep acting → Job commitment* (without self-actualization through the interaction)	.321***	.336***		CFI=.960
	Deep acting→ Job commitment	.051	.064	p=.259	IFI=.960
	Self-actualization through interaction → Job commitment	.655***	.665***		
4	Deep acting → Professional efficacy* (without job commitment)	.205*	.407***	p<.001 (z=1.66, p<.05)	GFI=.916
	Deep acting → Professional efficacy	.165**	.231**		TLI=.950
	Job commitment →Professional efficacy	.220*	.342***		
5	Deep acting →Turnover intentions	-.139*	-.188*		RMSEA=.042

Notes: All paths except those with \* refer to the paths for the baseline model with all partial mediations. Paths with \* refer to the full mediation models. *B*: standardized regression coefficients. Model comparison displays the difference between a model with all paths and a more parsimonious model one where the path between the independent variable and the dependent variable is fixed to zero. Model Fit indicators:  $\chi^2/df$ =Chi Square differences divided by degrees of freedom; CFI\_Comparative Fit Index; IFI\_Incremental Fit Index; GFI\_Goodness of Fit Index; TLI\_Tucker Lewis Index; RMSEA\_Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

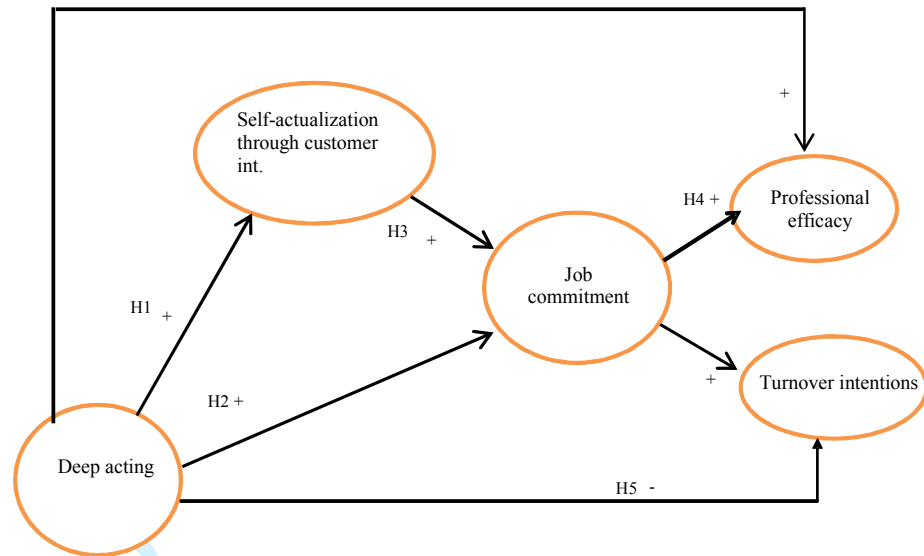


Figure 1- Hypothesized Paths among the Study Variables